## TESTIMONY OF CRAIG D. SPIEZLE
### Director of Market Development
### Microsoft Corporation


My name is Craig Spiezle, Director of Market Development at Microsoft Corporation, a leader in the U.S. information technology industry. On behalf of Microsoft, I would like to thank Senator Grassley, Senator Breaux and other members of the Special Committee on Aging for the opportunity to discuss with you the benefits that technology and the Internet can bring to seniors as well as the benefits mature Americans bring to the information technology industry. Although the information age is commonly associated with younger generations, and we regularly hear of young children's online proficiency, there is an overlooked but important symbiosis between older Americans and the Internet, particularly with respect to employability and life-long learning. The more senior Americans learn about using computers in the modem workplace, the more employable they become and the more likely they are to retain their jobs. Microsoft is proud to be a part of several of cooperative partnerships with the public and nonprofit sectors designed to help seniors remain independent, self-sufficient and productive members of society far longer than ever dreamed they possible.

We are currently faced with two world-wide revolutions -- the convergence of aging and the explosion in technology -- both of which are driving the transformation of society. Americans are living longer and having more productive and active lives than any generation in our nation's history. Every week, worldwide, 1 million people turn 60. In the United States alone, 10,000 people turn 50 every day. Many of these individuals remain part of the work force. According to author and business management guru Peter Drucker, Americans no longer retire at 55 or 65. While many *choose* to continue working, others work because they cannot afford to retire. And this trend will continue. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, by the year 2005, some 55 million workers, comprising 40% of the U.S. workforce, will be age 45 or older.

At the same time, the rapidly changing technology industry has driven incredible economic growth, new business formation and competitiveness. During the past five years alone, the information technology industry has generated a quarter of the real economic growth in the United States and now accounts for more than eight percent of our national output. With this phenomenal growth driving our economy, and as computer technology becomes more ubiquitous in our home, lives and work, computer literacy has become imperative for personal and vocational growth and advancement. In fact, a major impediment to continued economic growth in this country is the shortage of skilled, high-technology workers. Right now, as many as 340,000 high-tech jobs are going unfilled in the United States. In order to meet this challenge head-on and continue to grow our economy, we need to invest now in the tremendous human resources that have made America great, by promoting lifelong training and learning for all of our people.

From Microsoft's perspective, one of our key national assets in building a skilled workforce to meet our economy's needs is the senior community. We view mature Americans as a key solution to this skills gap and have instituted a broad range of programs to tap the wealth of experience seniors bring to the workplace and to help them develop and cultivate their technological skills.

Over the past 12 months, Microsoft has piloted several programs to expand PC literacy for older Americans with the objective of fostering employability. We recently completed over 700 "Lifetime Connections" seminars in concert with AARP, introducing over 70,000 seniors to the world of computers and the Internet. The original program called only for 500 seminars, but demand from AARP members was so high Microsoft and AARP added an additional 20,000 participants to the program.

In March 1998, we joined forces with Green Thumb to recognize America's star senior workers at the Prime Time Awards here in Washington, DC. A common thread among the winners was their newly developed technology skills. We learned a great deal from this program and have since embarked on several initiatives focusing on PC literacy. These include a $350,000 grant to Green Thumb , to work with private industry councils nationwide to develop information technology training programs that will provide thousands of seniors, dislocated workers and disadvantaged individuals with skills to begin new careers. The effort is part of the Microsoft" Skills 2000 initiative aimed at addressing the information technology work-force shortage by recruiting and training new people for jobs in the industry. In fact, Microsoft maintains a Skills2000 website located at http://www.microsoft.com/skills2000, which serves as a clearinghouse of ways to get a career started in the information technology industry.

Further enhancing the employability of economically disadvantaged older adults, we recently began working with the National Council on the Aging (NCOA) on a nation-wide e competition to award gr totaling more than $400,000 worth of hardware and software to organizations working with disadvantaged seniors. Within 30 days, Microsoft received over 400 applications from qualified organizations wanting to provide such training to recruit seniors back into the workforce. Moreover, the initiative encourages older Americans, especially those who are low-income, disabled or minorities, to learn to become computer- and Internet-literate. With the convergence of aging and technology, this is an excellent opportunity for organizations that serve mature Americans to empower them with PC and Internet skills training.

What have we learned from our experience with these programs? We have learned that together, Microsoft, the broader information technology industry, non-profit organizations and governmental agencies must collectively demonstrate the benefits of technology to *all* our citizens, especially our older citizens who are far to often overlooked when the subject is teaching technology. We are not talking about technology simply for technology's sake. We are talking about how technology can foster independent living, create virtual communities, unite families from all comers of the world, expand education, creativity and productivity, and perhaps most importantly, *extend employability for all Americans.*

People over the age of 60 represent the fastest growing segment of computer and Internet users. Yet, in the 60+ age group alone, about 35 million households don't have PCs. More than two-thirds of the group without PCs says they simply don't see the need. When many of them were children, their parents gave the same response when radio and TV were introduced. But this attitude almost always changes with the recognition that such technology presents the opportunity to be employed in a good paying job, extend one's independence and allow individuals to remain productive and creative. Indeed, we have witnessed tremendous receptivity to computer technology among mature Americans through our involvement in these programs. Across the country, senior centers, libraries, and community colleges are packed with seniors who have the desire to learn.

At Microsoft, we call this, "PC Empowerment." It is a real and powerful concept, and we feel privileged to be in a position to help enable people to use PC technology to improve the way we live, work, play and learn. Computers are not just about working and productivity but are about living and participating in the community. And people who are empowered by PCs become successful contributors to society, to their communities and to the whole economy.

The real story is best told in human terms. It's the story of the housebound widower who can access a wealth of benefits and services through the World Wide Web. It's the story of Milton Garland, who at 102 still reports to work every day. It's the story of the Native American tribe in North Dakota that archived the wisdom of its elders by putting tribal history, language and culture online for future generations. It's the story of how seniors in Australia have used email and document collaboration to

job-share with younger generations, mentoring and sharing their experience with them while remaining active in their chosen careers.

Why is this important? From our research over the past two years, we have heard a common theme from mature computer users. Seniors see computers as an integral part of their success, continued independent, living and employability -- all key requirements in today's society for any age group. The challenge is that in many cases these benefits are realized only if one uses and embraces technology. While PC purchases by those aged 60-69 represent the largest growth of any age segment, less then 5% of senior households own and actively use a computer. This compares to 40 to 45 percent of households overall.

This is our challenge: How do we communicate the virtues of computers and technology to mature Americans? From our research and travels, we have realized that we need a better "generational perspective" so that we learn seniors' viewpoints and attitudes about technology. We are often too quick to overlook the incredible experiences and expertise of seniors. I have learned that this generation's view of technology is dramatically different from that of the Baby Boomers or Generation X segments of the population. Even though some older Americans have shied away from computers, many others recognize that technology enables the flexibility and mobility they desire.

Many young, middle-aged and able-bodied workers telecommute, logging in to their office network from home. Likewise, PC technology enables seniors to work remotely from their homes where they're likely more comfortable. This technology can help all Americans live a better life - and mature Americans are no exception. The challenge ahead of us lies in showing people the benefits of technology, and working to create an environment where they are encouraged to embrace it. The benefits will accrue not only to the lives of seniors, but to the country as a whole as we enter the 21$^{st}$ century.

Mr. Chairman, I thank again you for this opportunity to share Microsoft's views with the Committee, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.